

Stargazing

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****Disclaimer:**** Ya ken Hamish Macbeth isnae mine. Wurra wurra.

****Summary:**** It's the last night of summer 1985, and so the townspeople decide to throw a small picnic for Lochdubh's soon-to-be-graduating class on the hills, under the stars. As the last few hours of their childhood saunter off carelessly into the darkness, Hamish, Alex, Isobel, and Dougal Brown have a couple of cans of beer, play some Monopoly, reflect on their livesâ€”and share a few of their dreams for the future.

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><p>The fire is burning high by the time the four of them excuse themselves from the adults and spread their blanket out on the slope of the hill. Laughing and throwing grass at each other, they tumble onto the blanket, holding their sides. Lying nearby is a pile of sandwiches wrapped in paper napkins, courtesy of the Campbells, and a thermos of hot chocolate (liberally laced with rum, thanks to Dougal).<p>

"What a night! Something to put in the _Junior Observer, _eh, Isobel?" Hamish hooks an arm casually around her shoulders. Isobel pushes him away playfully, in the spirit of things, but on the inside she is reeling.

"All right there, lassies?" The four of them look up and see PC Ferguson ambling towards them. His white beard is neatly trimmed as always, and he is in his uniformâ€"even though it's an informal gathering, and none of the present company would have minded if he'd shown up looking like Rip Van Winkleâ€"because that's just the kind of man he is. "Young Macbeth is no' givin' ye any trouble, is he?"

Alex snorts, flipping her golden hair over her shoulder (even her _snorts _are graceful). Isobel just grins. "If he were, you'd have heard him screaming for his mam long ago," she replies.

"Come on, Constable!" Hamish feigns a hurt look. "Why d'you always think I'm going to do something un-gentlemanly? I never see you givin' Dougal that kind of treatment!"

Ferguson chuckles. "Naw. Dougie's a _good _lad."

"Yeah, Hamish, I'm a _good _lad," parrots Dougal, batting his eyelashes, and Hamish thumps him in the stomach.

Still chuckling, Ferguson nods at them, gray eyes sparkling merrily in the firelight. "Well, if he starts gettin' handsy, chust gie me a shout, all right?" He tips his hat and is gone back up the hill.

"He's a good man," says Hamish unexpectedly, initiating a moment of silence. Then he props himself up on his elbows, tips his head all the way back and yells, "Lachie! Grab us a can from the cooler, would ye?"

"_Hamish," _says Isobel exasperatedly, while Dougal cracks up. "He's only _eight."_

"Aye? Eight's old enough to follow instructions!"

Lachie Junior scrambles over, clutching three cans of beer. "Daddy said the rest ain't cold enough yet," he explains apologetically, and adds with a bashful grin, "Miss Alexandra."

"That's all right, Lachie," Alex replies quickly, slipping the cans out of the boy's grip as though he could pick up on their behavior just by touching them. She rolls one across the grass to Isobel, another to Dougal, and holds up the last. "I'll share one with Hamish."

Isobel glances at Hamish to catch his reaction, to see if he'll declineâ€"but he merely continues sipping on his cigarette and looking off over the hills, and when Alex pops open the top of her can and passes it to him, he takes a swig and hands it back to her without missing a beat.

"I brought our Monopoly board," announces Isobel, pulling it out of her bag. When she looks up, she finds herself caught in Hamish's gaze, like a deer in headlights.

He is studying her as though he's never seen her before, his eyes fixed intently on her own. And in this frozen moment, she suddenly feels like she's seeing him for the first time, too.

"You're the only person I know who brings board games to a picnic," he says finally.

Isobel flushes, but this fact is lost in the dim light. "If you don't want to, we couldâ€"

"I didn't say I didn't _want _tae, you sensitive wee goose." Hamish holds out his hand cheerfully, palm up, fingers splayed. "Dog."

Grinning shyly now, Isobel roots around in the box and obediently drops the little silver Scottie into his hand, while Dougal shuts his eyes, reaches in, and plucks out his token blindly. "Damn, it's the stupid iron again. Give us another one, Isobel, go onâ€"

"Nope. No changin' once you've picked."

"Oh, come on! _No one_ wants to be the iron!"

"Hey, follow the rules, Mister Dougie _'Good _Boy' Brown," Hamish says with asperity, and Dougal pulls a face but takes the iron. "Anything for me," chirps Alex carelessly, so Isobel gives her the thimble and assigns herself the racecar, unfolding the game board.

They play in the carefree, laughing way that old friends do, accusing each other of cheating and arguing about how they don't all remember the same rules. After a while, the wind picks up and blows some of the paper money out from under the board and off into the darkâ€"but none of them mind, because their conversation has turned to matters bigger than buying up property and getting out of jail.

"What d'you think you'll do? You know, after." Isobel dawdles her racecar along the edge of Leicester Square. "I mean, I know I want to keep writing, so I'm probably going to university in Inverness to study journalism. But after that? I haven't a clue."

"No question about it for me." Dougal sticks his pipe between his teeth and speaks thickly around it. "I'm going to university to get my license, and then I'm coming back to doctor here. Like Dad did."

"There's always goin' tae be a Doc Brown in Lochdubh, aye, Dougal?" chuckles Hamish, and Dougal salutes in response.

"Well, _I'm_ not coming back here," announces Alex firmly, and everyone falls silent and looks at her. She appears extremely focused on tidying her wad of bills, smoothing out the creases, but her eyes are bright with something else.

"Oh?" Dougal stops chewing on his pipe and cocks his head to one side. "And what will Miss Alexandra do with her charmed life?"

She looks up coolly. "I'm going to move to the city and write a killer bestselling novel, and be disgustingly rich, and get a great

big flat. My furniture will be allâ€"what d'you call it? Art deco." She is giggling now at the grandeur of her own fantasy. "And I'll have filet mignon and caviar for every dinner, and macarons and petit-fours at every tea."

Hamish stares. "God."

"But no husband," Alex declares, winking at Isobel.

"And _no _cats," Isobel adds. "But you'll have to have a personal bodyguard, so when you walk down the street you don't get mobbed by your adoring fans."

"_Ours! _We could share the flat, Isobel, seeing as you're going to become the UK's most famous reporter. The Lovely, Loquacious London Ladies." Alex smiles through the curtain of her hair. "And you, Mister Macbeth?"

"Oh, I dinnae. Anything, really, so long as I get to stay. Repairs, shopkeeping." He cracks a smile. "Hell, mebbe I'll even go into polisin'."

"You?" says Dougal incredulously.

"Yeah? Why the tone of surprise? I could be Ferguson's, you know, right-hand man, like. March around town at his elbow, help him crack down on McCrae's schemes when they get out of hand. Share a bottle of whisky back at the station late nights." Hamish pauses, as if suddenly realizing just how close his dream is at the moment. "I'd get a dog, too," he adds after a moment.

"Policeman's got to have a dug," agrees Dougal. "For thief-tackling, missing-person-finding...bomb-sniffing...that kind of stuff."

"Aye, it'll be something fierce. Part wolf," Hamish decides, lying back and rolling over on his side. Isobel looks at her friend and imagines him in uniform, walking his beat with a spring in his step and a gleam in his eye. It would not be an unpleasant sight, she thinks.

"PC Macbeth," Dougal hums, lying back in the grass too and folding his hands primly over his stomach. "Has a nice ring to it."

"If only we could just get it all over with _now,"_ sighs Alex. "I want to _know_â€"how it'll all turn out."

"You could always ask TV John," Isobel points out.

"Nah." Hamish chuckles. "Where's the fun in that?"

* * *

><p>I've had this plunnie (do people still call them that? The last time I was really 'on' the fanfic scene was back in 2007, so I have no idea) hopping around ever since I hit season 2 of Hamish, so...here ye goo.

Also, while writing this I realized I know more Scottish slang/spelling than I thought I did. Brownie points!

End
file.